

Our Reference: UMJ-101-A (UM-1476)

PATENT

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

Applicant: Peter X. Ma
Serial Number: 09/255,963
Filing Date: February 23, 1999
Examiner/Art Group Unit: Sumesh Kaushal, Ph.D./1636
Title: THREE-DIMENSIONAL HYDROGEL/CELL SYSTEM

#31/E
Huta
3/25/03

COMMUNICATION

Assistant Commissioner of Patents
Washington, D.C. 20231

Sir:

If any charges or fees must be paid in connection with the following communication, they may be paid out of our Deposit Account No. 50-2100.

A Request for Continued Examination is being filed concurrently herewith. Entry of this Preliminary Communication is respectfully requested.

In the Claims:

1. A method comprising the steps of:
 - mixing an alginate salt and a source of calcium ions to provide a mixture;
 - adding a calcium releasing compound to the mixture to provide a three-dimensional crosslinked hydrogel system; and
 - selectively controlling shrinking, swelling or maintaining of the hydrogel system by varying a calcium ion concentration of a medium into which the hydrogel system is introduced.
2. The method of Claim 1, further comprising the step of culturing the three-dimensional crosslinked hydrogel system in the medium for growing cells in vitro.